Warning Concerning Copyright Restrictions

The Copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyright material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction not be "used for any purposes other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.
All of us here care about issues of quality: quality of schooling and of education, as they are related to quality of life. As educational researchers we want to assess the significance of the arts in education and what they do for the lives of students in the most meaningful sense. In my talk I will share my perspective on what type of research can contribute to that end, and towards the improvement of the practice and advocacy of arts education.

Elliot Eisner remarked years ago that the kinds of nets we cast determines the kinds of fish we get. Translating it to our context of needed research in arts education, the kind of research we do reflects the types of benefits we seek. Evaluating the impact of arts education on students’ learning— including skills, attitudes, and understandings—should use a variety of measures, from the quantitative measurements of achievements, to qualitative observations of arts education in their naturalistic manifestations and in-depth interviews with the participants who engage in arts experiences, students and teachers. Intensive observations can enhance our understanding of programs by conveying qualities of experience and the educational opportunities they provide. Open-ended, phenomenological interviews can capture how these experiences are interpreted by the participants and the meanings and values they construct.

Expanded vs. Simplistic Views of Art in Education

Given that education is initiation of the young into the knowledge, skills, values, and commitments common to the adult members of the society (see, for example, Egan, 1997), and that the central task of socialization is to inculcate a set of norms and beliefs of the adult society that the children will grow into, it is

---

1 This chapter will be published in June, 2001 in McCarthy, M. (Ed.). Enlightened advocacy: Implications of research for arts education policy and practice. College Park, MD: University of Maryland. It was part of a panel with Elliot Eisner, Frances Rauscher, and James Caterrall, arguing the pros and cons of the “Mozart Effect” and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for music learning.
essential to reflect on what and whose values we advocate. Scientists and humanists as well as “the general public” recognize that meaningful interaction with music is more complex and richer than a 10 minute exposure to classical music before an examination; that the benefits of music are deeper and more rewarding than a short-term increase in IQ or improved test scores. In fact, scientific, well-designed research (like Frances Rauscher’s and her colleagues) is careful to qualify its findings and to point at what needs to be done to enhance applicability and meaningfulness. However, advocates and the media are sometimes quick to popularize these studies, translating research to newspapers articles, and in the process, over simplify and over generalize. The format and style of newspaper headlines shape the message. And so, within one week, we read in three different newspapers that “the arts make kids smarter,” and that “children who study the arts in high school got higher SAT scores.”

The attempt to ground the arts in a pragmatic, instrumentalist framework has characterized arts education since its introduction to formal schooling in the nineteenth century, when advocates emphasized the arts’ contributions to the world of work and to good citizenship. Wolf (1992) noted that historically the arts were admitted to the common curriculum so long as they served virtue, religion, citizenship, and industry. Without that transformation, Wolf claims, they would not have survived in the curriculum, but would have stayed where they were centuries before; in the private preserve of those who had enough leisure and enough money. That situation is no different now: Recent advocacies of arts education seem to legitimize them only inasmuch as they imitate the goals of academic subjects. This approach to education is promoted by the voices of businesses and community members that associate education primarily with jobs, the economy, and the production of good citizens. Advocacy for arts integration is often justified on these assumptions and goals.

The contributions of the arts to those subjects traditionally considered as academic and to the business world can be conceived narrowly or widely, generating respectively different consequences to the ways the arts are framed and taught. Early calls for integration, with broad views of artistic contributions,

---

2 not examining the various meanings of “smarter.”
are manifested in the Music Educators National Conference Yearbooks of 1933 and 1935, which included such titles as “Project in the Interrelation of Music and Other High School Subjects,” and “Fusion of Music with Academic subjects” (Dykema & Gerkens, 1944, pp. 398-99) advocating the arts based on their contributions to academic subjects. Later in the 70s, as advocacies were translated to projects and curricular materials, the teaching and learning of basic subjects through the arts, for instance, were promoted by projects such as RITA (Reading Improvement through the Arts), or ABC (Arts in the Basic Curriculum) (Bundra, 1987).

Evaluation research applied to assess the expected benefits of the arts typically consisted of experimental studies conducted in laboratories to measure effects of exposure to music. The focus of research on exposure rather than education shapes the ways in which the arts are used. Accordingly, the States of Georgia and Michigan have mandated the distribution of classical CD’s to all families with newborns. Many school districts, I am told, require listening to Mozart during recess. Indeed, the notion of music as a background in supermarkets, telephones “hold” and hotel elevators is part of our culture, teaching us to “tune off,” not to pay attention. As a central attitude toward music, using an Deweyian language, this is miseducation, a desensitizing, rather than an intensifying experience.

It seems then that in this quest for increased test scores, we are doomed if we succeed or not. If the arts won’t fulfill that “quick fix” promise, if research can’t demonstrate quick measures of progress in academic (usually multiple choice) subjects, the arts will be as quickly abandoned as they were adapted, in search of a new remedy. We are also doomed if the arts fulfill the expectations, by treating the arts as background effect and means to increase test scores.

So far, the effort to justify the arts on narrow pragmatic rationales was not successful. (Indeed, common sense suggests that basic skills can be tackled directly, rather than through the indirect route of the arts, and that the three Rs

---

3 In the early 1990’s, a recent newspaper article reports, researchers found that college students did better on tests that measured some skills associated with mathematics and geometry if they listened to Mozart’s music first. Many educators, the paper continues, “fully expect that when those studies are completed, such a correlation will be quantified.”
are more predictive of success in verbal and mathematical IQ tests, writing job applications or balancing a checkbook, than are music and dance activities.) We need a cautious meta-analysis of all research on the effects of art education to assess what can be expected realistically. Ellen Winner and her colleagues at Harvard’s Project Zero are currently analyzing research relevant to the claim that the arts lead to academic success, in their project called REAP, Reviewing Education and the Arts Project. Their research, which will be out within a year, reviews the hundreds of studies investigating the relationship between learning in the major art forms and learning in other areas of the curriculum. While the research picture they are uncovering is complicated, with some kinds of transfer occurring, other kinds not, their research does show that the claims made by the media are grossly exaggerated. For example, they have found no actual scientific evidence showing that music affects infant brain development and leads to subsequent school success. This conclusion has elicited strong responses, both positive and negative, from arts educators, and policy makers.

The attempts to relate the arts to economic success are not unique to the United States but are raised across the globe. Especially in times of unemployment and economical problems, people tend to look to education to serve the needs of industry, reduce the number of unemployed, increase the country’s competitiveness in a global economy. The arts, as well as other aspects of the curriculum, are then asked to place more emphasis on the skills that prepare students for employment. These skills don’t have to be narrow and can incorporate the cognitive, structural, communicative and expressive aspects of the arts.

In Australia, for example, arts proponents are required to show how they contribute to general student learning in other academic areas, like literacy, cultural awareness, and communication. The arts’ particular contribution is regarded as the acquisition of key competencies (Livermore & McPherson, 1998; McPherson, 1995). The National Australian Arts Education report (NAAE/ACER), for example, recommends using mathematics in music and visual arts. A sample of training activities contributing significantly to acquisition of key competencies include: learning about basic musical structure, rhythm,
balance, and acoustic science in music; and learning about perspective, balance, geometry of design, and scale in visual arts. The key competency of “solving problems” includes improvising, directing, acting, designing in drama, preparing schooling scripts, negotiating with clients, and exploring media ethics in media. The key competency of technology includes using samplers and synthesizers, and managing sound systems in music; and using cameras, microphones, graphics and software in media. The framing of the arts in Australia is couched in concepts and terms outside of the arts from cognitive and technological domains. However, this framing is not presented as a “quick fix” but allows a larger conception of utility and skills, addressing ways of perceiving, conceptualizing, processing, relating, and communicating.

To summarize, at the core of the issue is what we value as a society, or how narrowly do we value. The story of educational research and evaluation is fraught with simplistic beliefs that test scores and other narrow slices of behavior provide us with the only valid information about the value of educational programs, about students’ progress and growth. The kind of research and findings reported in US newspapers place the arts as subservient to academic subjects and mathematical and verbal tests, which are presented as subservient to the business world. Clearly, it is important to address the concerns of policy makers. However, our major task is to consider the merits of the arts and their fit with the deep educational notions of John Dewey, Susan Langer, Herbert Read, Maxine Greene and other great scholars and educators.

In his article in “Art Education,” James Catterall (1997) framed the issue as whether we advocate the anachronistic “arts for arts sake,” or not. I believe that as educators, Catterall and myself and all others in this room, are always concerned with “arts for people’s sake.” The question, of course, is how do we define people’s “sake”: what creates our well-being and success. Is it limited to economic and business parameters? Is it limited to test results as measured in mathematical or verbal scores? Howard Gardner framed this view of narrow testing in the early 80’s with his “multiple intelligence” concept. Another perspective on the role of the arts is presented by Ms. Herbert Kupferberg, a
high school language teacher whose husband quotes her as saying:
“Trigonometry is for a term, music is for a life time.” The narrow vs. expanded view of intelligence framed by Gardner, and the short vs. long term roles of art articulated by Ms. Kupferberg, shape not just the images but also the uses and educational practices of the arts. They shape fundamentally how we perceive the goals of arts education, and the research that we do to evaluate arts education.

Needed Research

The first part of the paper concerned the issue of wide vs. narrow usefulness of arts in education. I now reflect on the kind of research that can capture the meaningful and complex roles of the arts in education. Informed advocacy is based on the understanding of the nature and role of the arts in education, and the factors that contribute to current arts education practice. Effective reform is seldom born of goal-setting and standards-raising but rather of intensive analysis of problems and careful delineation of areas susceptible to improvement. Clearly, the research we conduct reflects our cherishing—the kinds of knowledge and practices we value and would like to see expanded. Scholarly research in education is based on what kind of value system we want to promote, and our vision of human beings we want to shape. We need a better understanding of the values embedded and communicated in arts education, and the educational goals they serve. My own studies of school art in the US and in other countries show that there are important differences and that the arts serve fundamental values (different aesthetics, expressivity, interpretation). I see two types of interrelated areas of study that are needed to complement existing research: 1. Studies examining the complex operation and effect of art education in its natural settings, focusing on ordinary and exemplary school art as well as on informal settings of arts learning (e.g., playground, computer based music instruction). 2. Studies exploring the “experienced arts education” from the perspectives of students and learners, including longitudinal studies examining long term effects.

Naturalistic Studies of Arts Programs in School Context

---

4 in his article in the Parade Magazine (Feb. 28th)
Controlled experiments typically involve a specific, well defined art activity as intervention (e.g., a particular piece of music, played for so many minutes). However, when it comes to “real”, day to day arts curriculum of the schools (or for that matter interactions with the arts in life), the manifestations of art are multiple, and extremely diverse. Any attempt to connect “art education” to any effects should specify what “arts education” is.

Thus, before we extrapolate from the lab studies to real, complex arts education, before we set goals to reform arts education and advocate based on our expectations of the reform, we need to learn more about what the schools provide as opportunities for learning. We need research that examines what exists, including constraining conditions, and that points toward how to improve them. We can also gain insight into the opportunities of arts education by studying exemplary school settings and how they foster an educational climate conducive to exploration, expression and thinking in a variety of media, informal, out of school settings where arts education takes place can expand our vision of artistic genres and ways of engagement and participation.

School Art

The significance of the intensive study of the arts in the schools cannot be overstated. Although philosophies and agendas for arts education abound, School Arts practice has received little attention. This is all the more intriguing in view of how little can be known about arts practice in the schools without actively exploring it. Factors contributing to this inaccessibility include the fact that we have no theoretically motivated and respected arts education curricula and textbooks; the lack of mandated requirements and the absence of testing; and the vast diversity of potential arts activities. These are interrelated (and have both negative and positive aspects). The absence of national, state, and district-level prescriptions taken seriously, leave more room for diversity and open-endedness.

Furthermore, arts in the school embody certain contradictions. The arts are characterized in the aesthetic literature by their nonpracticality, the cognitive and emotional distance from everyday objects and activities that they facilitate; yet schools are environments that are often expected to prepare students for
practical life. Arts defy a-priori, rigid criteria; yet schools feel obliged to create accurate a-priori evaluation mechanisms. Arts are acknowledged to be expressive; yet schools are disciplinary systems and typically abhor expression. In order to understand how these apparent contradictions resolve themselves in reality, the research we need should be able to capture not just the explicit but also the implicit and the null curricula (Eisner, 1979).

Context is central to the understanding of arts education. The meaning of any kind of art is inseparable from the conditions under which it is generated and experienced. School art is no different. Some religious art and music evolved in awe inspiring churches with particular purposes and ideologies. Much of western fine art emerged in the courts of kings and dukes for a particular clientele, later on forming and shaping 19th century concert halls and museums. Contemporary popular art is framed commercially, targeting widely different clienteles. It is dependent on technology for its dissemination, making it accessible to large populations, and in this process changing not just the “setting” of art experiences, but also the mode and nature of these experiences.

In contrast to fine and popular artistic genres with their distinct contexts, formats, purposes, clientele, and value systems, the contexts, formats, clientele and value systems of “school art” are rarely examined. School art is distinct from other genres (e.g., fine art, folk art), yet draws on them to re-frame and adapt to its unique goals and structures (Bresler, 1998b). The understanding of “school art” as a genre requires the understanding of the contexts that shape and define it. There are three levels of contexts interacting and shaping arts education: micro, meso, and macro levels. The micro level--teachers’ expertise and beliefs, students’ background and values, interacts with the meso, institutional level--the structures, resources and goals of the school system, and with the macro levels--the traditions of the specific art discipline, the larger cultural values and the place of art in it. These are some of the contexts that shape the contents, pedagogies and the roles of school arts.

---

5 Context is defined as “the whole situation, background or environment relevant to some happening” (Grossman and Stodolsky, 1997, p. 181).
Unlike the fine and popular arts, school arts function in contexts that are not elitist nor commercial. The history of arts education in American schools (mentioned earlier) is one relevant context to the understanding of current school art. School art in the United States evolved in educational settings of the 19th century with the expansion of public school and mass education. The incorporation of the arts into the general curriculum was a struggle from the very beginning, never quite assuming equal status with the academic disciplines which have constituted the foundations of schooling. The recent newspapers articles extolling the utilitarian virtues of arts are manifestations of the arts striving at accountability, by making similar claims to those made for the academic subjects, in order to be as highly valued.

There is an interesting interplay between the goals of school art and the larger goals of school. During the 150 years of its existence, elementary school art and music rode different ideological and pedagogical waves, assuming radically different functions: serving utilitarian goals to earn a living (e.g., by training drawing skills); spiritual goals (e.g., singing to praise the lord); humanistic goals (e.g., cultivating the mind); and therapeutic goals (e.g., providing children with means of self-expression and emotional outlet). Each of these goals generated different arts curricula, contents, pedagogies and experiences. So, in addition to the subservient position of the arts to academics, they also fulfill a complementary role: In my own research the arts were often perceived by teachers and administrators to provide educational benefits that are missing in the academic curriculum (Bresler, 1994a). I was intrigued by manifestations of discrepancies between teachers’ beliefs about art (and sometimes their art activities outside of school) and their actual teaching of art. These discrepancies can be traced to the specific context of the school, its goals and values, and to the imitative and complementary roles of the arts to academic curriculum (Bresler, 1992). The source of the issue lies the fundamental dilemma of whether the arts mirror or expand school values (and the same dilemma for the school: whether the school mirrors the values of the society or expands them).

**Variety of School Art**

**Subjects**
School art comes in vastly different shapes and forms. The scope and variety of arts activities found in our qualitative studies of elementary school arts was striking (Stake, Bresler, & Mabry, 1991). The most apparent distinction among school art manifested in school materials and recognized in the scholarly literature is the distinction of the arts by their subject matter: visual art, music, dance or drama (in secondary schools we may also find creative writing and media studies). The research literature recognizes that each of these disciplines leads to different skills, sensitivities, and types of knowledge. The distinction by subjects is also reflected in scholarly and practitioner publications, which are dedicated to the individual arts disciplines (in fact, their writers and readers often don’t go beyond their individual discipline6). The separation of the arts into distinct subjects is also reflected at the college levels in their allocation to different departments. This is different from their counterparts in African and Asian countries (See, for example, Adinku, 1999; Mans, forthcoming; Nettl et al., 1997).

There is a recent move towards the integration of the arts among themselves, often as a way to save resources (Bresler, 1995). Against the new trend are not only school art practitioners and teacher educators in arts education, but also philosophers of art (see, for example, Ralph Smith in the U. S., (Smith, 1995) and David Best in the UK (Best, 1992; 1995)) who caution against the intellectual soundness of lumping all arts education in the same category.

Art Types

Another important distinction in school arts which is rarely framed in the existing literature cuts across the different arts subjects and refers to fundamentally different meanings of art: (1) “child art”; (2) “fine art”; and (3) “art for children” (Bresler, 1998a). "Child art" refers to original compositions created by children in dance, drama, visual art and music. "Fine art" refers to classical works in the different arts media created by established artists. "Art for children" refers to art created by adults specifically for children, often for didactic and/or

---

6 Two important exceptions are the journals of Arts Education Policy Review and the American Education Research Association based Arts and Learning. Although both of these publish papers of all arts education, the individual articles frequently deal with a single art form/type.
entertainment purposes. These art types exist outside of school but are reframed within school structures and goals.\footnote{These are not comprehensive. There are other types of arts used in the school, such as craft, folk art and traditional art.}

Each of these art types is based on different ideologies and different sets of practices. The philosophical foundations of "child art" in formal education can be traced to Rousseauian notions. It became a legitimate and important subject of scholarly research and discussion during the child study movement of the late 19th century and its practice in schools became more prevalent in the early 20th century with the writing of pedagogues such as Victor Lowenfeld and Rhoda Kellogg. It was meant to focus on children's expressivity and liberate them from traditional, rigid art instruction.

In contrast, the use of "fine art" in the school was grounded in humanistic goals, highlighting a pursuit for excellence, and the acquisition of cultural knowledge. In the operational curriculum it often involves cognitive and critical pedagogies, but can also be based on rote, factual approach. Revived by the notion of Discipline Based Art Education (which drew on the ideas of Manuel Barkan and Elliot Eisner in the visual arts), it is based on the disciplines of arts history, arts criticism, art production, and less frequently in the schools, on the discipline of aesthetics.

The school type of "arts for children" claims no scholarly framework. It does not, like "child art", espouse self-expression; nor does it assume, like "fine art", to be "the best of the culture". Rather, it serves commercial and practical needs in providing materials that are meant to be developmentally appropriate, accessible and relevant to children's life.

It makes a big difference which of these types are used. Each offers different learning opportunities and cultivates different set of skills (that can be, and should be supportive of each other).

\textbf{Pedagogies}

Not only is each art type based on a separate set of ideologies and goals, it is also related to different underlying assumptions about the nature of art. These assumptions are incompatible with each other on the ontological level (what
constitutes art) and carry dramatically different pedagogical implications (how to teach it).

Pedagogical orientations in school art cover a wide range, from the rote, teacher centered, season and holiday activities like the Easter bunnies, through the open-ended, student centered activities, to teacher directed activities highlighting scaffolding and critical thinking, in both art making and appreciating (Bresler, 1994a). [Provide concrete examples.] Another pedagogical distinction refers to thinking in artistic (visual, kinesthetic, auditory) media versus an emphasis on verbal, textual information (for example, in music and art history).

Furthermore, distinct genres in each art form (e.g., classical, jazz, and folk in the “fine art” traditional) have different traditions in learning and teaching it. Within each genre there are different activities (e.g., listening, performance) which also require different teaching strategies. Needed research should pertain to the acquisition and instruction of these different types and genres, in “naturalistic,” settings both in and out-of school settings.

Roles of Arts Education

Arts education serves diverse roles, which are shaped by the different ways in which school arts are framed. Many of these roles belong to the hidden curriculum. In my qualitative studies of arts education in schools, I encountered teachers who played recorded music as background for recess or in transition times, sometimes while the teacher was talking with her aide, instructing students to put their heads on their hands, (Bresler, 1996). The image of the art as “soothing the beast in the kids,” as one Chicago teacher told me, implied a passive, background exposure to the arts. A different, social framing was implied in holiday programs and school events, where parents and community congregated to attend arts activities, celebrate and applaud their children singing and acting on stage.

A more conventional framing, resembling the regular structures of schooling, is arts instruction by classroom teachers. This was usually a sporadic, often a Friday afternoon activity, when “students brains are drained” and they
“can’t concentrate on anything important” as teachers repeatedly told me. Still another framing is the consistent, once a week, 30-45 minute sessions taught by an art specialist as part of union requirement to provide classroom teachers with release time (which means that during art instruction the teacher grades papers or leaves the room). These lessons by art specialists typically included artistic vocabulary, skills and lenses. Thus, the roles in these arts activities vary, including social (bringing together the whole school as well as parents to school activities); creating a calming ambiance; making holiday and season craft; and teaching arts-based concepts and skills. The framing of the arts ranges from the mundane to the festive and celebratory, from a class activity to a whole school event.

These are only a few parameters that shape diverse arts activities, providing different kinds of learning opportunities and messages, and cultivating different skills and sensitivities. Other, related parameters of arts education refer to contents, structures and sequence, to financial and physical resources, to evaluation practices. All these send implicit, yet powerful messages on the value of arts education.

**Exemplary Arts Education Programs**

The understanding of typical arts education needs to be based on in-depth research in ordinary schools. At the same time, it is also important to examine excellent programs and the conditions which facilitate this excellence. Some of the most inspiring arts programs illustrate that integration of the arts into the curriculum does not have to be simplistic or subservient. The Reggio Emilia preschools (e.g., Katz, 1994; Rabbiti, 1994) testify to the power of visual activities in expanding perception and thinking as a central part of children’s exploration of complex reality. My own fascination with these schools was evoked not only by children’s striking art work, but by teachers’ obvious excitement in and dedication to children’s thinking and doing in all areas and activities. That caring commitment of teachers was more powerful than any formal curriculum I have ever encountered. (Yet, the Korean group which visited the school at the same time kept insisting on “curriculum materials.”)
In the United States I saw evidence of highly successful arts programs integrated in high schools where I conducted for The College Board and the Getty Education Institute for the Arts a naturalistic case-study evaluation of five high schools integrating the arts into academic disciplines (Bresler, 1997). Methods included intensive observations of the integrated arts/academic instruction, and of artistic events in the school and of faculty meetings; in-depth interviews with teachers, administrators, students and parents; and analysis of curricular materials and student work.

Successful integration of the arts involved supporting structures for educational reform, for example, same-student body for team teachers, as well as scheduled, regular meeting time during the year and intensive summer time for academic/arts teachers, and monetary compensation for these special meetings. Integration also involved a change of roles of both teachers and students in what often became a transformed learning environment.

Some subjects lend themselves to integration more easily for various reasons from the traditions of conceptualizing a subject (and teaching it) to the enculturation of its teachers. In all five sites the three subjects of English/Social Studies/Visual Arts offered the most sustained interdisciplinary linking. The predominant pattern was distinct to the sub fields of English as Literature, combining with Social Studies as History, and with Arts as Criticism, History and Production. Math and Science were far less integrated with the arts as compared with the humanities. Music was less integrated with academic subjects as compared with visual arts.

In general, integration occurred through common issues, themes and broad questions. Integration style involved the introduction of artistic ways of seeing, analyzing and communicating to expand inquiry. The curricula emphasized personal and social relevance, connecting the past to present and faraway cultures to contemporary America. Student interdisciplinary learning was largely constructed through individual and group projects, involving independent research and its public communication. Evaluation strategies drew upon portfolios and projects (instead of essays and tests), encouraging the presentation of concepts and ideas in a variety of modes of representation.
Change of roles for teachers and students was an unexpected emerging issue. The most obvious change of roles for participating teachers was their heightened movement towards developing, rather than just implementing, curricula. In particular, "first ring" teachers reported feeling expanded in the integration process, and these feelings of self-growth sustained them in their efforts and feelings of uncertainty. Academic teachers moved away from reliance on textbooks towards identifying overarching themes, and broad issues, drawing upon a variety of resources, and, in their words, learning to listen to others--mostly other teachers, sometimes museum educators, often students. Instead of the traditional framework of an isolated teacher, teachers started to see themselves as part of a larger whole, becoming conscious of how their curriculum fits and affects other subjects, and the ways in which they can draw upon other subjects. At times, museums and their resources were used as an integral part of the course. In three schools, collaborations with a variety of museums and other cultural institutions have expanded the learning environments and the richness of “fine art.” The extent to which the schools used the cultural centers depended on the availability and proximity of these resources. Important to the social role of the arts specialist in the school, which is traditionally isolated, is the fact that arts teachers became more central to the school and its mission.

Students' ownership of art and academic work was stressed in all sites, and connected with issues of identity, voice, and pride in one's ideas and creation. Observations of the operational curriculum revealed reflective discussions, coaching of individual students directed toward academic excellence in the projects, as well as personal meanings of such work. Students' attitudes as revealed in our conversations were positive to enthusiastic. Several of the schools provided opportunities in the arts for ordinary students whereas the magnet school and the Academy of Arts and Sciences catered to those already interested in the arts.

Administration support was key to success and reflected in various ways. In Texas, the principal allowed her teachers to target the 10 grade, the most vulnerable group in terms of testing and accountability (In fact, this particular
school became, from being one of the lowest to no. 1 in academic achievement in
the district). In another school, the headmaster secured funding for the position
of director of curriculum innovation, and hired additional arts teachers from soft
funding. In a third school, the principal was central in initiating and establishing
the arts-centered school, providing advocacy, recruiting teachers, funding and
resources.

In those studies that examine excellence of art education in school context,
measuring achievements can be important as part of a variety of measures and
data sources. The assessment of the increase in test scores in the College
Board/Getty sponsored Texas high school (or in its equivalents in other projects
like in ELM Creative Arts elementary schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin) was a
major event signifying, in teachers’ eyes, success and legitimization by the local
administration. But it was the other data sources, the observations, conversations
and interviews, that created the deeper understanding of success (and the nature
of success) and the diverse types of impacts on both students and teachers.

An important study published recently is *Gaining the arts advantage:
Lessons from school districts that values arts education* (published by Arts Education
Partnership and the President’s Committee of the Arts and the Humanities). The
study examines eight districts that were selected on the basis of demographic
and geographic considerations for site visits by a team that included one
researcher and one superintendent of schools. The publication reports on a
general set of findings as well as specific strategies and best arts education
practices found in the districts. According to the report, the single most critical
factor in sustaining arts education in their school is the active involvement of
influential segments of the community in shaping and implementing the policies
and the programs of the district. Supportive superintendents, school boards, and
principals were essential. The community--parents, artists, business, arts
organizations, and institutions--is actively involved in the arts politics and
instructional programs of the district. Other factors include strong art education
programs in the elementary level; a comprehensive vision and plan for arts
education; and the identity and expertise of teachers as artists.

*Studying the Arts and Arts Education in Informal Contexts*
Informal, out of school contexts can serve as important sources for learning about diverse artistic repertoires, and the roles of the arts in children’s lives. Studies of informal artistic contexts can help us understand how children choose art appealing to them, how they acquire stylistic conventions, and learn it. Patricia Campbell (1998) discusses the range and types of activities for children: lullabies sung by mothers to infants; play songs sung by young children in yards and parks; singing games and clapping chants of school playground; listening to background music of TV shows and advertisement genre. Using Lave’s analysis of situated learning as legitimate peripheral participation in an on-going community of practice, Eve Harwood (1998) investigates music learning as it occurs on the playground, including the setting of an after school club for Afro-American girls (For other exemplary studies, see, for example, Garrison, 1985; McCarthy, 1999).

Technology is part of the changing context of art and music, shaping contents, settings, and styles of interaction, Peter Webster’s (1998) seminal work on technology examines the educational philosophies underlying computer assisted music instruction and discusses the new opportunities it affords. By understanding the attractive aspects of arts in informal settings, we become aware of the expanded possibilities of arts education, some of which can be adopted to school settings.

**Experienced Curriculum**

Another neglected area in the scholarly literature is what John Goodlad and his colleagues (1979) call "The Experienced Curriculum"-- students' experiences and perspectives of engagement in the arts and its curriculum. Teaching requires a phenomenological sensitivity to students' realities and their worlds, facilitating teachers’ abilities to see the pedagogic significance of situations and interactions with children (see, for example, van Manen, 1990). Phenomenological research can enhance teacher understanding and sensitivity. The study of experienced curriculum draws on a phenomenological approach, and highlights “lived experience,” the meanings that students construct. One such study is Susan Stinson's insightful exploration of high school students’ perceptions of their dance curriculum, and its meaning within their school and
life experiences. The study of experiential knowledge of students’ lived experience, where participants define the categories and fill them with their personal meaning, is almost non-existent in the arts education literature. Because experiences are emic and holistic, the specific themes that emerge are often unanticipated.

Long-term studies of students’ experiences can reflect a perspective gained through time. One such long-term study is a doctoral dissertation by Kay Collier-Slone (1991). Using open-ended, phenomenological interviews, Collier-Slone explored students’ and parents’ experiences of the Suzuki Method, and its impact on their lifelong learning and attitudes. The 26 participants in her study have been involved in Suzuki method training from their preschool or early elementary years through high school graduation. The data were collected via video-tape and audiotape recordings that documented individual experiences, capturing participants' voices and concerns as articulated by them. Students’ narratives highlighted the contribution of the Suzuki method in developing students’ self-esteem, attitudes and values, and an understanding of how the existential nature of music was integrated into musical as well as other aspects of their being. Participants reported the ability to be fully present and to live in the here and now. They perceived that they were capable of performing extra-musically based upon the successful, affirmed musical experience of their student years. Other themes included perceived self-discipline transferred to a later stage of maturation, involvement in the process of self-analysis and the development of self-regulation as a natural and positive force from the early days of study, the development of significant work habits and residual skills that impacted their current professional endeavors, and the ability to isolate difficult tasks and work repetitively in small segments until mastered, using building-block steps in approaching a project or new learning. Students also reported the development of interpersonal relationship among parents, teachers and peers and their parents, where students saw themselves as having a place within an extended family with consistent rules, values and attitudes which provided them with a feeling of security and continuity.
Another project is Tom Barone’s study of the long-range influences of a visual art teacher on his students. This was a sequel to a case-study done in the early 80’s where Barone documented a successful arts program in a North Carolina Appalachians high school. Barone (1997; in progress) uses collaborative, educational (auto)biographical accounts of the traces of this teacher’s impact on former students’ life-stories. 16 years after the initial case-study, students talk about how the teacher shaped their motivation to venture out of their familiar settings and seek higher education in top academic institutions, to make career (and sometimes personal) choices with integrity, to believe in their ability to create and transform, to become themselves inspiring educators.

Studies like these are rare. The lack of close examination of students’ and teachers’ perspectives is part of larger priorities and values. Students and teachers, while at the core of education, are politically weak, lacking authority, marginalized in policy discussions. Still, because their perspectives are so central to any understanding of arts education and its effects, research focusing on them is essential.

Dissemination of Research

Embracing the types of research discussed in the last section is essential to its dissemination to schoolteachers and policy makers. Teachers, rather than needing more prescriptions, need visions for improved instruction that would allow them space for interpretation, imagination and a space for the development and expression of their own artistic and educational values. They need a basis for understanding how students relate to arts experiences and to various pedagogies and strategies in the arts. They also need improved conditions for teaching and more support for the use of out-of-school resources. Involving teachers in the dialogue on research issues is central to an effective dissemination of research.

Until recently, educational research was pretty much university-based and did not include the contributions that teachers can make to both the academic research community and the community of school-based teachers (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990). This was true for the arts as well. Until the 1980s, most research in arts education research drew on developmental, experimental
psychology, often removed from social classroom reality and participants’ understanding. That, combined with the extensive use of statistical jargon in which these papers were written, did not invite teachers as readers, let alone as active participants in formulating research issues and sharing their perspectives. The last decade has seen an increasing emphasis on issues related to classroom teaching and learning and the day to day curriculum, often incorporating teachers’ perspectives and using a more communicative, narrative style.8

However, research and practice involve fundamentally different settings with different types of expertise, tasks and reward systems that contributes to the lack of conversation between these communities. Involvement in research is not part of the practitioners’ culture--not embedded in their job definition and reward system. Research activities are not integral to teaching and are not regarded as an extension of a commitment to improve one’s practice. Rather, research is often perceived as isolated, ivory-tower activity, alienated from teachers’ realities, to be regarded with suspicion. Classroom practice changes slowly and needs more than abstract research to change. For all these reasons, the dialogue among researchers, teachers and advocates is limited: teachers do not typically raise research issues and only rarely participate in the design and writing.

The weak connection between research and practice has a long tradition in many countries. Thus, while research is increasingly being informed by school practice, school practice is not as informed by research as it can be. The lack of exposure to research in art education is also common among administrators, who are inundated with pressing problems of accountability, discipline, and public relations.

But the gap in discourse is gradually narrowing in the past twenty years. Two interesting examples of groups engaged in collaborative work among teachers and researchers for more than two decades are the North Dakota Study

---

8 Some journals for teachers, such as Arts Education, The Drama Theater Teacher, Update, Music Education Journal, and Contact Quarterly, include relevant, thoughtful articles for arts educators, presenting the implications of research findings for practice. Other teachers’ journals tend to be less even in their quality and depth, relying more on advocacy and a prescriptive, “how-to” approach.
Group and Dialogue in Methods Education (Bresler, 1993). Both groups, consisting mostly of classroom teachers, hold annual meetings, where formats consist of informal conversations as well as larger presentations, centering on the improvement of teaching. Topics range from concrete classroom issues (e.g., How do we know that children are learning?) to more general topics (e.g., historical and current perspectives on reform and testing). Presentations usually result in papers’ being distributed to members and sometimes published in teacher and research journals.

Other indications of bridging between communities are the momentum of teachers as researchers and the journals and books dealing with specific research issues as well as with methodological concerns (e.g., Noffke, 1996).

In some countries, the link between the educational research literature and national curricula which shapes practice is more closely connected. This happens when national curricula are created by those who are practitioners as well as visionaries. In the United Kingdom, for example, John Paynter’s work in the 70’s and 80’s was largely responsible for the strands of creativity and composition introduced to British schools, now an integral part of music education (Bresler, 1993; Paynter, 1977). Magne Espeland’s papers (Espeland, 1997; 1999) provide a compelling example of national curriculum reform in Norway and how it was shaped by practitioners at various levels.

Innovations encounter resistance. The successful dissemination of innovative curriculum often involves diverse mechanisms that facilitate dissemination. In the UK and in Norway, these mechanisms included networks of teachers who had ownership in shaping the curricular ideas, spreading the innovation to wider circles of practice. This dissemination was facilitated through articulate and outspoken rationale; sometimes through formative research aimed to improve programs and curricular materials (Bresler, 1994b); through clinicians workshops; and through communicative, clear documentation of innovative practice in video tapes.

---

This is part of a larger move towards collaboration and collaborative support systems known as groupware (Bruce, in press) which results in what we called “interpretive zones” (Wasser & Bresler, 1996).
Another related important avenue for dissemination is that of media productions. Eisner’s (1979, 1991) notions of “art based research” using a variety of media hold much promise for a more effective and communicative dissemination. Text is no longer a sequence of alphabetic characters on a piece of paper. Scholars like Barthes (1985), Eisner (1991), Latour (1988), and Lincoln (1989) have shown us that social arrangements, clothing, sports, schooling and a range of other phenomena can all be read as texts. New technologies are making photographs, sound and video images as manipulable, writeable and readable as alphabetic text (Bruce, in press).

The translation from research studies to large audiences typically involve a difficult, two-pronged task of negotiating between the values of the public, often used to a newspaper and television “headlines” style on the one hand, and respecting the complex, qualified claims of research on the other.

The most important criterion for any research is that it be about something important—important to policy makers and researchers, as well as to practitioners and students, our raison d’être. The gaps between research, advocacy, policy, and actual practice reflect the problematic nature of a field that is not critical of itself. The quest for important knowledge and understanding is central to all research, advocacy, and teaching. There are no general or extensive standards of rationality to which we can appeal in deciding what constitutes a valid understanding. Misunderstandings, according to Gadamer (1975), are caused by a failure to achieve an authentic conversation or an open, responsive dialogue with the object to be understood. The appropriateness of ideas and knowledge drawn from research will depend upon the extent to which teachers view them as speaking to their concrete, practical concerns. The ultimate test of the usefulness of research as a source of ideas is whether teachers and policy makers can use it to construct a workable theory of the case, when the outcome is both theoretical and a form of action.

References


Barone, T. (in progress). Touching eternity: Life narratives and the
enduring consequences of teaching.


President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership (1999). *Gaining the arts advantage: Lessons from school districts that value arts education*. http://www.pcah.gov/gaa


I am grateful to Eunice Boardman, Magne Espeland, and Ellen Winner for their insightful comments on this paper, and to Sue Stinson for sharing with me her work and advocacy papers. Many thanks to Kyunghwa Lee for her excellent secretarial assistance.